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CHAPTER VII.

WHY THE ABIPONES ARE SO VIGOROUS AND LONG-LIVED.

The Abipones are indebted for their strength and longevity partly to their parents, partly to themselves. The vigour of youth, preserved by temperance, accompanies them during the whole of their lives, and is even transmitted to their children. The Abipones never indulge in licentious gratifications during youth, and though of a fiery temperament, debilitate their constitutions by no irregularities. They amuse themselves with conversation, mirth, and jesting, but always within the limits of modesty. By a sort of natural instinct peculiar to themselves, both boys and girls hold in abhorrence all means and opportunities of infringing the laws of decorum: you never see them talking together either publicly or privately; never idling in the street. The girls love to assist their mothers in domestic employments; the continual exercise of arms and horses engrosses the chief attention of the young men.

The Indians of other nations are often shorter, slenderer, and less robust. Many of them con-

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dered that such children should be as imbecile in mind as in body.

Their education also conduces greatly to form the manners and strengthen the bodies of the Abipones. For, as Quintilian observes, in his first book of Institutes, that soft kind of breeding, which we call indulgence, relaxes all the nerves both of the mind and body. No one can object to the education of the Abipones on account of its delicacy. The children are plunged into a cold stream, if there be one at a convenient distance, as soon as they see the light. They know of no such things as cradles, feathers, cushions, swathing-clothes, blandishments, and toys. Covered with a light garment of otters' skins, they sleep wherever chance directs, and crawl upon the ground like little pigs. Whenever a mother has to take a journey on horseback, she places the child in a bag made of boars' skins, and suspended from the saddle along with the puppies, pots, gourds, &c. The husband will often come and snatch his little son, as he is sucking, from its mother's arms, set him on his own horse, and behold him riding with eyes sparkling with pleasure. When a mother is swimming in a river for the sake of a bath, she presses her infant to her breast with one hand, while she uses the other as an oar. If the child be pretty big, it is thrown into the

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868 water, that it may learn to swim while it is but
856 just beginning to walk. You seldom see little
857 boys but just weaned walking in the street with-
out a bow and arrow. They shoot birds, flies,
526 and all kinds of small animals. Their usual
amusement is shooting at a mark. They go out
every day on horseback, and ride races with one
another. All these things undoubtedly conduce
much towards strengthening and enlarging the
ooo body. Would that European mothers could be
brought to discard the unnatural artifices and in-
dulgences used in the bringing up of their chil-
dren! Oh that they would moderate the ban-
dages and cloths with which they bind, and as
it were imprison and enchain the tender little
bodies of their infants! then should we see fewer
bandy-legged, hump-backed, dwarfish, weak,
and diseased persons in Europe.

291 The Abipones wear a garment not tight to
their bodies, but loose and flowing down to their
heels; calculated to cover, not load and oppress
the body, and to defend it from the injuries of
the weather, without preventing the perspira-
tion, or impeding the circulation of the blood.
ooo All the wise people of the east, and most of the
ancient Germans, made choice of a large wide
garment. What if we say that their bodies
were consequently larger, and filled a wider
space? Those who wish to enjoy their health,

AMONGST THE OTHER GOOD QUALITIES OF THE MAR-
593 ried people amongst the Abipones, may be reckoned the tender affection which they display towards their offspring, in feeding, clothing,
462 and taking care of them. To tutor the boys
868 from their earliest age in the arts of riding, swimming, hunting, and fighting, is the chief care of the fathers. The girls are diligently instructed by their mothers in the domestic duties of females, and early inured to labour and in-
865 accommodation. But this is worthy of censure in them, that however disobedient or refractory their children may be, they never have the courage to correct them with a word, much less with a blow. Alaykin, chief Cacique of
[855] the town of Concepcion, whenever he visited me, held a little boy five years of age upon his lap. This child, who was as restless as a young ape, would sometimes pull his father's nose or his hair, and sometimes struck his face. The old man, pleased at this, would cry—"Look, Father! can you ever doubt that this fearless boy will sometime come to be a famous soldier or captain, since he is not afraid of me, a leader so victorious and so formidable to the Spaniards?" The same boy would throw bones, horns, or any thing else he could lay hold on, at his mother, when she came to call him home. The warlike father interpreted the child's insolence, which he ought to have pu-